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A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE FINE ARTS. VII.



PAC SIMILE OF PART OF THE CELEBRATED PRINT OF THE SEA MONSTERS.  
Engraved by ANDREA MANTEGNA.

## THE HISTORY OF COPPER-PLATE ENGRAVING\*.

## SECTION I.

## ON THE ORIGIN OF THE ART OF ENGRAVING UPON METAL.

THERE is plain proof, both from sacred and profane history, that the graver's art was known from remote antiquity, and, at first sight, it appears very remarkable that a certain species of engraving should have been practised from the earliest times, and yet that no one should have thought of taking impressions from their work, on parchment or paper. Yet as it frequently happens that discoveries of this kind are made, as it were, accidentally, by mechanics in the course of their labours, or by some other persons, equally devoid of any settled purpose of improving the resources of their art, we need not feel astonished at the fact that there were a great number of engravers, before there were any engravings, taking the latter word in the sense we now attach to it.

Considerable obscurity rests on the subject of the first invention of the art of taking impressions from engraved plates, but the honour is generally attributed to Finiguerra, an eminent goldsmith of Florence, who flourished in the fifteenth century. In his day a species of handicraft was much practised in Florence, called "working in *niello*." This sort of work fell into neglect during the sixteenth century, but was originally employed in the decoration of plate used for sacred purposes, as well as for the hilts of swords, handles of knives and forks, and on clasps and female ornaments. This species of workmanship is described in Vasari's *Lives of the Painters*, and as he also makes mention of Finiguerra, Mr. Ottley's translation of the passage may be quoted here. "The method of producing works in *niello* which are no other than designs hatched or painted upon silver, as we paint or hatch delicately with a pen, was discovered by the goldsmiths, even in the time of the ancients; for there are to be seen hollows cut with instruments of iron, and filled up with some kind of composition, in their works of gold and silver. The way of making works of this kind is, first, to design the intended subject with a point of steel upon the silver, which must be of an even and smooth surface, and then to engrave it with the burin—an instrument which is made of a square rod of iron, cut at the end, from one angle to the angle opposite, obliquely; so that being very sharp and cutting as it were, on both sides, its point runs along with great ease, and the artist is enabled to engrave with it most delicately. With this instrument all things are done, which are engraved upon plates of metal; whether with the intention of filling the work afterwards with *niello*, or of leaving it empty; according to the will of the artist.

"When, therefore, he has engraved and finished his work with the burin, he takes silver and lead, and mixing them together on the fire, makes of them a composition which is of a black colour, very brittle, and when melted, of a nature to run with great nicety into the work. This composition is then bruised very fine, and laid upon the engraved plate of silver, which it is necessary should be quite clean; the plate is then placed near a fire of green wood: when by means of a pair of bellows, the flame is blown upon the *niello*, which, being dissolved by the heat, runs about till it has filled all the engraved work made by the burin. Afterwards when the silver is cold, the superfluous part of the composition is scraped off, or worn away by degrees with a pumice stone; and lastly, the work is rubbed with the hand, or with a piece of leather, until the true surface appears, and everything is polished.

"In this mode of workmanship, Maso Finiguerra of Florence was a most admirable artist, as may be seen in certain *pates* by his hand, worked in *niello* in the church of St. Giovanni, at Florence, which are justly deemed astonishing productions.

"From this kind of engraving was derived the art of Chalcography, by means of which we now see so many prints by Italian and German artists throughout Italy; for as those who worked in silver, before they filled their

engravings with *niello*, took impressions of them with earth, over which they poured liquid sulphur, so the printers discovered the way of taking off impressions from copper-plates with a press, as we see them do in these days." In the second edition of his work, Vasari more directly ascribes the merit of the discovery to Finiguerra, and tells us that he rubbed the sulphur-cast with soot moistened with oil, until all its cavities were filled with black, and took impressions upon paper. He says that Finiguerra, having performed an engraving on a piece of plate, and intending to fill up the hollows with enamel, in order to try the effect of it previously to putting it on the enamel, cast some melted sulphur upon it, and on taking it off, perceived that the dirt (or charcoal with which he first tried his work) collected at the bottom of the strokes, by adhering to the sulphur, gave an impression of what he had engraven. Struck with the discovery, he repeated the experiment, by applying moistened paper to his engraving instead of sulphur, rolling it gently with a roller, and he had the pleasure of finding that this experiment was attended with full success.

It is easy to suppose that a discovery such as that made by Finiguerra would not long remain confined with him. The process was so extremely simple, that the sight of a proof would be almost enough to reveal the secret. Indeed it appears to have been the fact that in a few years after Finiguerra's discovery, the art, in this its first state, became pretty generally practised by the workers in *niello* throughout Italy. Finiguerra is described as having taken off his impressions with a roller. Whether this was his original method, or whether it occurred to him in his after-practice, we are not told: probably the latter was the case; but it was an important step; for it only required powerful and even pressure to make it the best of all means for taking impressions from engravings on metal; and therefore it was an evident advance towards the invention of the copper-plate printing press.

Another goldsmith of Florence appears to have followed with credit in the steps of the inventor, and to have been largely employed in engraving the designs of eminent artists. This was Baldini, and Ottley considers, notwithstanding Vasari's slight notice of him, that he held a high rank among the professional engravers of Florence in his time; and that his works were numerous and well-known. One of the engravings ascribed to Baldini represents a rocky mountain with a figure of Christ standing upon the summit, enveloped in glory, and surrounded with cherubim. Figures are seen ascending the mountain. One of these represents a young man dressed in the fashion of the time, apparently about to begin the ascent. He stands with his eyes elevated towards heaven, and his hand raised as if to prevent his being overpowered with the brightness above. On a scroll near him is the inscription, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help: my help cometh from the Lord." (Psalm cxxi. 1, 2.) While his aspiration shows the state of mind with which the young man is setting out on his heavenward course, we observe also that his left foot is bound with a ribbon or bandage, by which a demon is holding him down to the earth. This work has considerable merit, and if it may truly be ascribed to Baldini, it speaks well for his skill and taste.

Sandro Botticelli was a painter and engraver of Florence, contemporary with the two before-named artists. He appears to have shone principally as a painter, for Vasari thus speaks of his engraving, after having favourably noticed his pictures. "Being a person fond of novel pursuits, he commented upon a part of Dante; and designed and engraved the *Inferno*; about which work he consumed a great deal of time. This interfering with his painting, was the occasion of great disorder in his affairs. He likewise engraved many other things from designs which he had made; but in an indifferent manner, because he had but little skill in the management of the burin."

Antonio del Pollajuolo was another famous Florentine artist. He studied anatomy with a view to his art, and was rewarded for his trouble by a power of delineating the naked figure, unequalled by any artist of his time. Among his engravings the most celebrated are "A Battle

\* The history of Wood Engraving is contained in *Saturday Magazine*, Vol. XX., p. 209, and Vol. XXI., p. 200.

+ Vasari has omitted the mention of other ingredients in this composition, but notices them subsequently.



of naked Figures," and "Hercules combating the Giants." The former very scarce print is on reddish paper; "each figure is nearly eleven inches in height; the heads have some faint dawnings of expression, and the shadows are produced without crossings, by diagonal lines, apparently done to imitate the hatchings of a pen, and in the same direction in which it is customary to write; but the outlines and shadows are dry and hard, and the forms vulgar and heavy. It is only by comparing Pollajuolo with his contemporaries and predecessors that we learn to respect his performances."—LANDSEER'S *Lectures*.

While the new art was thus flourishing in the place of its birth, (Florence,) it was aided by numerous contributors in the Venetian States, and the other northern districts of Italy. Andrea Mantegna, born near Padua in 1431, and well-known as a celebrated painter, has the credit of being one of the earliest and most successful practisers of Line Engraving, in which he had great advantages through his superior knowledge of design. Of this artist's merits Landseer gives the following notice. "By his more intimate knowledge of the antique, and his superior use of that knowledge, he improved the drawing without materially altering the style of Pollajuolo, by whom he is presumed to have been instructed in the new art. Indeed, as the local energies and practical perfections of painting were at this time so imperfectly developed, it was much more natural, and in the same degree more wise, for engraving to imitate pen and ink drawings than to imitate pictures; and the best of Mantegna's prints derive a peculiarity of character and of value from this circumstance. By intermingling the appearance of the finer strokes of the pen, as it worked upwards, in his shadows, he softened and mellowed the stronger lines; so that the whole became a more appropriate vehicle of the obscurity he had in view: and the exact similarity of his style of engraving to his own mode of drawing sufficiently shows that to imitate pen and ink drawings was the boundary of his aim." A specimen of the bold style of this artist is given in our frontispiece. In the centre of the piece from which it is taken, is a triton, who, seated on a sea-horse, and armed with a bundle of fish, is aiming a blow at his adversary on the right. The latter, who is also seated on a sea-horse, defends himself with a staff. In the back-ground, between the two combatants, is a figure of Neptune, standing on a pedestal, and seen in a back view. On the left, a third triton is represented, riding on a monster of the crocodile tribe. He is seen in front, and takes no part in the combat. Behind this triton, standing on the back of a monster on which he is riding, is a figure of Envy, holding a tablet on which is inscribed INVID, besides some other obscure characters. The triton on the right hand of the engraving is that which is represented in the frontispiece. The piece, altogether, measures seventeen inches in width, by eleven inches and a half in height.

Mantegna received the honour of knighthood from the duke of Mantua, for whom he painted that celebrated picture, the "Triumphs of Julius Cæsar," which he afterwards engraved, and which is now in the palace at Hampton Court.

Besides the prints generally known of this artist, all of which display in their workmanship the hand of a practised engraver, there are some others which appear to have been among the first essays of his burin. One of these is the graceful figure of a young man bearing a yoke upon his shoulders, and dragging after him a heavy ball, attached by a chain to his leg. This piece appears to have been drawn or scratched on a small plate of some soft metal, prepared for the purpose in so rude a manner, that even the irregularities occasioned by the hammer in the edges of the plate, are apparent all round. It seems to have been printed with a common roller. This print is given in Mr. Otley's work as copied from the engraving in his own collection. About this period, according to the Italian writers, the invention of prints in *chiaroscuro* became due to their countryman, Ugo da Carpi. The title of *chiaroscuro* was at that time exclusively, and therefore improperly, applied to the new mode; because "effect of light and shade," which is the meaning of the term, is a necessary part of every engraving that goes beyond mere outline. The mode of engraving invented by Ugo da Carpi was to cut the outlines on one block of wood, the dark shadows upon a second, and the light shadows or half-tint, upon a third. The first being impressed upon the paper, the outlines only appeared; this block being taken away, the second was put in its place, and thus the dark shadows were added. The third block impressed upon the same paper made the demi-tints, and the print was com-

pleted. In some instances the number of the blocks was increased, but the operation was still the same, the print receiving an impression from every block.

This invention is also claimed by the Germans, who produce several engravings by Mair, which are dated 1499, and one by Lucas Cranach, dated 1500, which are prior to the time of Da Carpi's reputed invention. There is, however, a considerable difference in the *chiaroscuro* of the old German masters. Mair and Cranach engraved the outlines and deep shadows upon copper. The impression was then tinted over by means of a single block of wood, with those parts hollowed out which were designed to be left quite white upon the print.

Many other names of meritorious engravers might be added did our space permit; but we must proceed to that style of engraving in Italy, which was introduced at the commencement of the sixteenth century.

## SECTION 2.

### ITALIAN ENGRAVERS OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

Marc Antonio Raimondi was the founder of the new and beautiful style of engraving, in the practice of which the art was carried to a high degree of excellence by him and by his followers. This style united the delicacy of burin, which had already begun to distinguish the artists of Germany and Holland, with the chaste and elegant design of the Roman school. A modern artist in examining the works of Marc Antonio might complain that his lights are not enriched with that variety of fainter tones, which indicate local colour, and that his prints do not possess the harmony arising from *chiaroscuro*, or the beauty of reflex light. But it must be recollected that *form* and *character* were the great objects of pursuit in those days. The account given by Vasari of this artist, though probably containing a few errors, is interesting as presenting the chief particulars of his life. We are told that during the time that Francesco Francia practised painting in Bologna, one of his disciples more ingenious than the rest was especially brought forward. This was a young man, called Marc Antonio, who having been many years with Francia, and being much beloved by him, acquired the surname of *de Francia*. This artist was even a more skilful designer than his master, and managed the burin with ease and taste. He was especially skilful in works in *niello*, which were then much in use; but being seized with a desire to travel, he took leave of Francia, and repaired to Venice, where he was well received by the artists of that city.

About this time some Flemings arrived in Venice with a number of Albert Durer's prints both on wood and copper; which being seen by Marc Antonio in the Piazza di St. Marco, he was so much astonished by their style of execution, and the skill displayed, that he expended upon these prints almost all the money he had brought with him from Bologna, and purchased, among others, the series of thirty-six wood-cuts of the Passion of Christ, a work commencing with the fall of Adam, and his expulsion from Paradise by the Angel, and ending with the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles. Marc Antonio saw at once how much honour and advantage would result to the individual who should devote himself to the advancement of that art in Italy, and from that time, though already a skilful engraver, he attended to it with the greatest diligence, copying the engravings of Albert, studying his mode of hatching, and other peculiarities in the prints he had purchased. He now counterfeited in copper, with bold hatchings, like those of the wood-cuts, a series of Albert Durer's prints, and not contented with the excellence of the imitation he went so far as to mark his counterfeits A. D., and to pass them off for the genuine works of Albert. This unpardonable act brought upon Marc Antonio the indignation of Albert Durer, who hearing of the deception repaired to Venice and made his complaint to the government, from which, however, he could obtain no other satisfaction than a prohibition which was issued against the use of false initials by Marc Antonio. Soon after this event the latter artist went to Rome and there he engraved Raffaele's designs under the superintendence of that great artist, and in a style of excellence which astonished all Rome.

After the death of Raffaele, Marc Antonio engraved some very fine battle pieces, from the paintings of Giulio Romano; and also some others of an objectionable nature, the work of the same artist. These latter performances gave so much just cause of offence to the Pope, that both artist and engraver fell under his displeasure. The artist escaped to

Mantua, but Marc Antonio was thrown into prison, where he might have continued long, but for the intercession of some powerful friends.

Among the numerous scholars of Marc Antonio, two of the most celebrated were Agostino Venetiano, and Marco di Ravenna. From the school, indeed, of this remarkable engraver went forth professors who established his principles not only in Rome, Venice, Parma, Mantua, Bologna, Ravenna, and other cities of Italy, but in some parts of Germany, and the north of Europe. While Marc Antonio was in the zenith of his fame, the city of Rome was taken by the Spaniards, (1527,) and the unfortunate artist lost in the pillage all the wealth he had accumulated. One account represents him as having retired to Bologna after this misfortune, and dying there; another account states that he was assassinated by a nobleman of Rome for having, contrary to his engagement, engraved a second plate of the Murder of the Innocents, after Raffaele. From the high degree of perfection with which the character of Raffaele's works is preserved in many of the engravings executed by Marc Antonio after his designs, Mr. Ottley infers that the engraver was, in some instances, assisted in the execution of his plates by the painter himself; especially in the outlines of the figures: or at least that he engraved them under his immediate direction and superintendence.

The extraordinary artist Parmegiano, who was born at Parma, in 1505, and died at the early age of thirty-five, is generally believed to have been the first Italian who successfully practised the art of etching. Strutt says that in the etchings of this great master we discover the hand of an artist working out a system, as it were, from his own imagination, and striving to produce the forms he wanted to express. We see the difficulty he laboured under; and cannot doubt from the examination of the mechanical part of the execution of his works, that he had no instruction. It appears to have been something entirely new to him, without the knowledge of anything better. He was certainly not the inventor of etching, because it was practised in Germany before he was of age to attempt it; yet it appears as if he had been unacquainted with the prior discovery, or only knew of it imperfectly by report; and in the latter case he might have been nearly as much at a loss as in the former. Nevertheless the spirit and genius of his works are such as justly render his etchings extremely valuable, and on this account they have been often copied, and sometimes indifferently.

So great was the renown which arose to the Italian school from the labours of Marc Antonio, that it became customary for foreign artists to repair thither, that they might catch the inspiration remaining among the disciples of that celebrated man. Among these was Cornelius Cort, a native of Hoort, in Holland, a man of much ability, who repaired to Venice, and lived in the house of Titian, making some of Titian's finest pictures the subject of his engravings. He subsequently settled at Rome, and founded a school, which opened new means of improvement to the burinists of Italy. Cort engraved at Rome the greater part of those prints which are esteemed as the peculiar treasure of collectors. The art had been hitherto chiefly confined to small plates, but his open, grand, and forcible style, in which boldness and freedom are seen combined with delicacy and clearness of effect, was adapted peculiarly for subjects of large dimensions. The most remarkable pupil of Cornelius Cort, in Italy, was the eldest of the three talented brothers named Caracci, already noticed in our Supplement on Painting\*. It is said of this Agostino Caracci that for beauty, for outline, and for expression, he left no burin to be compared with his own. Basan thus speaks of him. "This excellent artist, equally versed in the sciences and fine arts, treated his engravings in so perfect a style that one knows not which to admire most, the correctness of his drawing, or the beauty of the performance. All young artists ought carefully to observe with what facility and perfection he expressed the extremities of his figures, and with what art he executed even landscapes with the graver." The drawings of this artist were in the bold free style of Cort, but evincing great superiority to that master. The drawing of the naked parts of the figure and the character of the heads are remarkably fine. The draperies are occasionally stiff, and crossed with a square second stroke, which gives them an unpleasant effect. He also partakes of the prevalent fault of his age, in his inattention to *chiaro scuro*. Other painters besides Caracci, practised engraving, in a greater or less degree, in Italy, and among them we find

the names of Spagnoletto, Guercino, Salvator Rosa, Claude Lorraine, Swaneveldt, Canaletti, &c.

Two artists now come under review, whose original powers and vigorous intellect were displayed in a large number of very excellent engravings. These were Della Bella and Callot. The latter artist was renowned for the multitude of figures which he introduced into many of his engravings, as well as for the number of subjects executed during the short period of his life. One of Callot's largest engravings is called the "Great Fair of Florence," and consists of a bird's-eye view over a vast area, within which are thousands of figures, grouped with appropriate taste and skill, and engaged in all the varieties of business and of entertainment carried on in an Italian fair. This surprising production is such as would almost exhaust the patience and attention of modern art; but Callot is said even to have copied this print on account of the great demand for it. The engravings of Della Bella are nearly as numerous as those of Callot; and their merits are, in many respects, very similar. "If, with the elegant lightness of form and exquisite taste of Della Bella, we seem more in the fairy land of engraving, Callot possessed more perspicuity, more firmness of outline, and greater powers of composition; yet they are twin-brothers in point of excellence, and, to the present hour, unrivalled in their department of art."

Castiglione, Mola, Falda, Francisco, Pietro, Ricci, Rosetti, Piranesi, and many other artists of merit, adorned the school of Italian engravers, and Schiavonetti's versatile powers have given us an example of that school up to nearly our own times. His residence in England, though favourable to his fame, was productive of fatal effects to his constitution. He died at Brompton, in 1810, of pulmonary disease.

### SECTION 3.

#### PROGRESS OF ENGRAVING IN GERMANY.

We now proceed to notice the engravers of Germany, whose skill kept such even pace with their brethren in Italy, that it has often been contended that the art they practised must have been discovered in Germany at the same time, or even prior to the period when Finiguerra was flourishing in Italy. There seems, however, no real ground for depriving the latter country of the merit of this important discovery, although the German artists may have adopted the idea with great celerity, and have given substantial proofs of their ability at a very early date. There are numerous engravings extant, the work of unknown artists, possessing much merit.

Martin Schongauer was one of the greatest artists of his time. He was born in the year 1453, that is, seven years before the invention of Finiguerra. According to Wimpeling, the pictures of this artist were anxiously bought up, and transmitted to Italy, Spain, France, England, and many other parts of the world; and at Colmar, in the church dedicated to St. Martin and St. Francis, painters flocked from all quarters to copy the altar-piece, which were the work of his hand. The facility evinced in the engravings of Martin Schongauer, makes it probable, that the story of his being a goldsmith as well as a painter, is correct. His engravings on copper are supposed to have all been executed during the last twenty years of the century in which he lived. His death is said to have taken place in 1500.

Schongauer's plates are numerous, and show that his mind was fertile and vigorous. If it was not sufficiently vigorous to burst the Gothic fetters which at the time manacled the taste of Germany, his admirers may solace themselves by doubting whether the unassisted powers of any individual whatever would have been found adequate to so difficult an occasion. The tyranny of established custom is probably not less stern and unrelenting in the arts of design than in those of education. How the stiff and meagre manner, the angular draperies, and emaciated forms which characterize the early productions of the Germans, came to prevail among the Gothic and Celtic nations from whom they derived them, is a curious, and, perhaps, not an unimportant question. By comparing the early efforts in art of all nations of which we have any memorials, we may be led to infer that man has gradually learned to see objects as they really exist in nature. It is a curious fact that the attempt to imitate the human form, when made by uncivilized nations, however distant and different from each other, is nearly always characterized by a similar lankness and meagreness of form. Notwithstanding this meagreness in the works of Schongauer there is sufficient evidence that

\* See Saturday Magazine, Vol. XX., p. 125.





THE HARES COOKING THE HUNTSMAN AND HOUNDS.  
Fac-simile of a Print by VAN MECHEM.

he was a diligent observer of nature, and if we have access to some of his best prints, or to the specimen of his Madonnas given by Mr. Ottley, we shall agree in the eulogium that has been passed upon this artist, *i.e.*, than in representing religious subjects he gave a certain simplicity, joined to devoutness of character, peculiarly his own. "His angels are graceful beings, the spotless inhabitants of a better world; his Madonnas and female saints possess a virgin modesty, and an easiness of deportment, which render them, although they are not beautiful, particularly captivating."

We might be disposed to wonder at this remarkable degree of skill attained so early in the history of the German school of engraving; but the fact was, that skillful goldsmiths or enamellers were at that time numerous, so that numbers of expert burinists were ready, in every great commercial city, to turn to good account the discovery of Finiguerra.

The next German engraver of celebrity was Israel van Mechem, yet his works have a certain barbarous style of design, which led to the remark of Bartsch, that his works bore the stamp of his times, without any redeeming beauties, and that he stands therefore below Schongauer and his other contemporaries, so that no artist has ever copied one of Israel van Mechem's plates. The latter assertion is denied by Strutt, who says that this artist had several disciples. Ottley also thinks this judgment on the artist unjustifiably severe, and gives the little specimen here presented to our readers, to show that strange as were some of his subjects, Van Mechem was not without considerable talent. This small print represents a party of hares roasting the huntsman, and boiling the hounds. In the centre lies the trussed and spitted huntsman immediately in front of, or almost in the fire, which blazes on the hearth. A hare on either side is gravely employed in turning the spit, which rests upon iron supports, or dogs. Four large cauldrons or saucapans are placed on the fire, and in three of them we see a portion of the unhappy hound within. A hare stands near the last cauldron to the left, and is endeavouring to shut down the lid on her victim; another to the right is taking some salt from the salt-box to season the contents of the pot, and in the back-ground, we see a hare adroitly using the bellows, by means of her teeth and paws, to keep the fire in good cooking order. Altogether there is something so comic in the idea, and so far from ungraceful in the execution, that Van Mechem cannot be readily despised either as a designer, or an engraver.

Numerous works of unknown, or of comparatively obscure, artists are noticed as belonging to this period, (the close of the fifteenth, and commencement of the sixteenth century,) but we need not pause between the last-named artist and Albert Durer. Of the merits of Durer's engravings, Mr. Ottley thus speaks: "Although it may admit of a question, whether or not the example and great reputation of Albert Durer, as a painter, were not productive of evil effects, fully equivalent to the good; there can be no doubt that his numerous works of engraving merit our warmest praise. To that intelligence of execution, which may at all times be expected in engravings performed by the hand of an original designer, he united a clearness, a delicacy, and at the same time a freedom of burin, which, even until now, have, perhaps, never been surpassed, inasmuch that, independently of that respect which the reputation joined to the antiquity of the artist may lay claim to, his finest prints are still deservedly considered as masterpieces of art." Having already noticed this artist as a wood-engraver, and referred to other artists whose names

will again occur\*, it only remains to remark on their skill in the particular department of art we are now considering.

Lucas van Leyden was remarkable at a very early age for his knowledge of painting and engraving. His earliest dated print is in 1508, when he was fourteen years of age. He at first sought to produce the effect of highly-wrought miniatures, or drawings in Indian ink, by the extreme proximity of his hatchings; but afterwards finding how difficult it was to produce numerous and perfect impressions from plates so executed, he adopted a more open and regular style. This artist was not so correct a designer as Albert Durer; but in the arrangement of some of his compositions, and in some other respects, he has been accounted superior. Thus Vasari says: "The compositions of Lucas are remarkable for their propriety; everything being expressed in them in a manner so clear and unaffected, and so free from confusion, that it seems as if the fact which he treats could not have taken place, otherwise than he has represented it; his works being in that respect regulated more according to the true principles of art than are those of Albert. Besides which, it is to be observed that he evinced extraordinary judgment in engraving his plates; touching the different objects in his compositions with greater lightness and delicacy in proportion to their distance, as one would do when using colours; thus imitating nature, where objects appear soft and, as it were, melting into the air, to him who views them afar off; which nice discrimination of Lucas has opened the eyes of many of our own painters."

Thus Albert Durer and Lucas van Leyden were the means of introducing a more perfect style of engraving than had yet been known in Europe. Albert Durer left a flourishing school of young students, who rapidly spread the principles of their master, and gave rise to other schools of engraving in various cities of Germany. The example of Lucas was also followed in the Low Countries, and both his delicate productions and his more boldly executed works met with many admirers and followers.

Of Albert Durer's engravings on metal, one hundred and eight pieces have been particularized. In the catalogue of an Amateur we find a reference to what appears to be a ludicrous mistake respecting one of Durer's works. "In describing the works of Albert Durer under the head German School of Engraving, in Rees's *Encyclopædia*, among other prints is noticed 'the Infant Prodigy,' a kneeling figure in folio; some pretend that this is a portrait of Durer himself." This infant prodigy is doubtless no other than the 'Prodigal Son' by our artist, so translated by the compiler from the title '*L'Enfant Prodigue*,' in the work of Bartsch, or of some French writer."

Many of the followers of Durer were classed under the title of the *Little Masters*, from their works being of very small size. These we cannot even enumerate; our object being to select those names which appear to have had considerable influence on the history of the art.

In this light we must notice, at a later period of German art, and when the graceful style of Italy had been introduced, the two brothers Kilian, the elder of whom was the patriarch of a family of artists. This individual was born in 1547, at Augsburg, and died there in 1637, after passing many years in Italy, chiefly at Venice. Strutt says: "Few artists have manifested a greater command of the graver than Lucas Kilian; whether we consider the apparent facility with which his strokes are turned over each other, or the firmness with which they are executed, one

\* See *Saturday Magazine*, Vol. XXI.; p. 210.

cannot help admiring it, though it evidently strikes us, that by paying too close attention to this part of the art, he neglected the correctness of his outlines, and fatigued the lights with unnecessary work, by which means he broke the masses, and often totally destroyed the effect of his prints." At this period also flourished John William Baur, a celebrated painter and engraver. His designs exhibited decided marks of genius, but also betrayed a want of refined judgment to make a proper choice of the most beautiful objects.

Contemporary with these artists were the Sandrart family, and others of inferior name. Passing by the names of Frey, Ridinger, Thiele, &c., we advance to the times of the three brothers Schmutzer, who produced some excellent portraits for the galleries of Vienna. These artists flourished during the early part of the eighteenth century. Jacques Schmutzer, the son of the younger brother, after suffering great vicissitudes, became also a distinguished artist, and was named by Maria Theresa a Director of the Academy at Vienna. He superintended the education of a great number of artists, and led the taste of the capital up to the close of the last century. Nor must we omit to notice George Frederic Schmidt, of Berlin, who about the year 1744 was nominated engraver-royal, and whose talents, developed in Paris, were justly appreciated not only by his own countrymen, but by the Empress Elizabeth of Russia and her court. The prints of this artist prove him to have been a man of great abilities. Some excellent portraits, and other subjects of his, are left to announce his skill and neatness of execution.

#### SECTION 4.

##### FLEMISH AND DUTCH ENGRAVING.

Lucas van Leyden, born in 1494, and already spoken of as one of the contemporaries of Albert Durer, was the founder of the Dutch school of engraving. His works are spirited and masterly, but not numerous. After his death the art made little progress, until the family of Sadeler at Brussels began to attract notice. The father, who was an ornamental workman, engraved steel and iron to be afterwards inlaid with gold and silver. The sons, John and Raphael Sadeler, born at Brussels in 1550 and 1555, were brought up to their father's business, which may account for the facility they acquired, and the numerous plates they were able to execute. Their works consisted of history, landscape, and portrait, the latter of which are in general very fine, and much esteemed. Egidius Sadeler, however, who was the nephew of the preceding, and was born at Antwerp in 1570, ranks highest in the family, and is reckoned among the best of Flemish burinists. His execution is said to have been as dexterous and happy in works requiring the utmost neatness and fidelity, as in others that demand strength and boldness. Portrait, landscape, and history, by turns employed the powers of this industrious and clever artist.

Cornelius Bloemart introduced the practice of tinting the lights on his distances and other parts of his plates, which had been previously left entirely untouched. Henry Goltzius added further improvement to the art, by employing the bold, free, and clear style of cutting that distinguishes his works. Lucas Vorstermann, born at Antwerp in 1580, studied painting in the school of Rubens, by whose advice he exchanged the palette for the graving-tool. Vorstermann was more attentive to general effect and intelligent discrimination of objects, than to neatness and regularity of execution. He was correct in outline, and gave to his heads a fine expression.

The two Bolswerts are favourably mentioned as being the first successful imitators of the brilliant style of Rubens.

The school of which they were the leaders was for some time remarkable for correct drawing, and a faithful rendering of the harmony and beauty of the originals, but after the death of Rubens the art gradually declined, and worthy performances in the higher department of art became rare. But in landscape, animals, and such subjects, many beautiful etchings were produced, chiefly by painters. Here the name of Rembrandt stands pre-eminent. His works consist of history, landscape, and portrait. Notwithstanding the defects in his drawing of the human figure, and the absurdity of his clothing most of his figures in the Dutch fashion, yet the wonderful richness of effect produced by this artist, and his unrivalled management of light and shade, together with a certain boldness and freedom of execution, stamp him one of the greatest artists that ever lived.

His etchings are mostly performed with aqua fortis, and finished with the graver and dry point. They are numerous, and possess very different degrees of merit. Vandyke's etchings, though few in number, are unequalled for fine expression, and tasteful execution. Several artists, who were pupils of Rembrandt, or imitators of his style, have also left fine etchings. Those of Ferdinand Bol, Lievens, and Van Vliet, are commended for their fine breadth of light, their spirit and effect. A few engravings were executed at this time by Janus Lutma in a new way called *opus malleo*, or the work of the hammer. It was performed on the copper with a hammer and small punches and chisels, like the etching-points, and the shadows were made of any depth, according to the force of the blows, and the closeness of the dots.

The family of the Visschers deserve notice as excellent engravers. Of the works of Cornelius Visscher it is said, "His mode of execution with the graver was as singular as the effect he produced was scientific and beautiful; his strokes on the draperies and back grounds are laid, as it would appear, without attention or study in what direction they should lie, but just as the plate happened to lie before him, and these he crossed and re-crossed till he had produced the necessary depth of shadow or colour, but on the flesh he bestowed particular care, and his heads are finished in an excellent style, and display both the character and expression of the original, and his own dexterity in handling the graver." John and Nicholas Visscher were also clever engravers. The etchings of the painter Ruysdael are little more than outlines, but these are full of vigour. Ostade's etchings represent merry-makings, and other humorous subjects.

In the etching of animals, no other artist can be compared with Paul Potter. Profound anatomical knowledge, and scientific drawing, mark his productions, and as his etchings are not very numerous, they gain a high price. After him Van de Veldt and Du Jardin rank high for etchings of cattle, and Berghem evinces task and spirit in the same department. The etchings of Cuyp, Stoop, and others, may share in the same praise. An amateur, named Count Goudt, of Utrecht, also executed some plates of distinguished merit; but after his time we find no very remarkable performances emanating from this school.

#### SECTION 5.

##### THE FRENCH SCHOOL OF ENGRAVING.

The art of engraving was introduced into France from the neighbouring school of Germany, about the middle of the fifteenth century, by some individual now unknown. The first French engraver is said to have been Noël Garnier, who lived about the period above alluded to. Stephen de Laune, whose works are very numerous, surpassed Garnier in skill, and made many successful copies from the engravings of Marc Antonio. The followers and successors of these artists are not worthy of particular notice until we arrive at the name of Claude Mellan. This artist first introduced the method of expressing all the varieties of shadow by parallel lines, without crossing. In single figures he succeeded very happily, but the method was quite unfit for large compositions. This artist was born at Abbeville, in Picardy, in 1601. His genius for drawing discovered itself at an early age, and he was sent to Paris that he might have the benefit of the instructions of Simon Vouet. But he was diverted from his studies by an earnest desire to learn the management of the graver; and at length, having acquired much facility, he went to Rome, and engraved a considerable number of plates, many of which are held in great estimation. He returned to France, and settled in Paris in 1654, when the king assigned him apartments in the Louvre, in the double quality of painter and engraver. Florent le Comte says that Charles the Second was so much pleased with his performances, that he invited him to England, making him, at the same time, very advantageous offers. But the love of his country prevented his accepting them. Surrounded with honour, and blessed with an excellent constitution, Mellan lived to the age of eighty-seven, exempt from most of the infirmities usually attendant upon age. The most singular of all Mellan's productions is that called the Holy Handkerchief or *Sudarium* of St. Veronica, which is executed with one spiral line running in concentric circles from the point of the nose to the extremity of the work—representing, as large as life, the head of Christ crowned with thorns. We must inform our readers that the Roman Catholic saint, known as



"*Santa Veronica*," was canonized in consequence (as it is said) of her having offered to our Saviour, as he proceeded to Golgotha laden with the cross, a handkerchief, wherewith to wipe the sweat from his brow. This handkerchief, according to the legend, retained, by a miracle, the impression of the Divine countenance, and was treasured up as one of the most precious relics of the order of St. Veronica. The engraving of Mellan, therefore, represents the front face of Christ, as if depicted or impressed on drapery. The method of working adopted by the artist was so novel and surprising that it might almost be said to partake of the miraculous, and therefore to be not unfitly adopted for the legendary tale in question.

Contemporary with Mellan was Robert Nanteuil, regarded as one of the wonders of his profession. This artist was born at Rheims, 1630, and died at Paris in 1678. Being the son of a merchant of small fortune, he received a classical education, but in the intervals of his studies found time to cultivate the fine arts; and to mark his decided predilection for that of engraving, he even engraved his theses of philosophy. He married at an early age, and on visiting Paris, voluntarily abandoned all other pursuits, and devoting himself entirely to the art of engraving portraits, became the most original, if not the best portrait engraver that ever existed. Nanteuil lived in an age when his art was liberally patronized. Louis the Fourteenth being made acquainted with his merit, caused him to draw his portrait in crayons, and was so pleased with the performance, that he created the place of "designer and engraver of the cabinet" expressly for Nanteuil, with the yearly pension of a thousand livres. This honourable post our artist continued to occupy with high reputation up to the time of his death. No fewer than two hundred and eighty plates are known to have been engraved by Nanteuil, a surprising circumstance when we consider the shortness of his life, and are also informed that the charms of his conversation caused his society to be courted by men of the first rank in the state, as well as by those of the first genius in fine art. Some few of these plates are historical subjects, but the greater part were portraits, some as large as life, executed through the medium of crayon pictures, made by the artist himself.

The most brilliant period of French engraving, and the time from which we can alone date the celebrity of the school, is that of the reign of Louis the Fourteenth. The magnificence of the monarch, with the taste of his minister Colbert, drew together such a brilliant train of artists as had never before appeared at one time. Among these the first place must undoubtedly be given to Gerard Audran, the most distinguished of a family of artists of that name. This extraordinary man carried his art to such perfection, that he is pronounced by some authorities to be, without exception, the greatest engraver that ever existed in the historical line. He engraved large plates after the Italian masters, with astonishing fidelity and success. His great excellency is said to have been that though he drew admirably himself, yet "he contracted no manner of his own; but transcribed on copper with great truth and spirit the style of the masters whose pictures he copied." On viewing his prints you lose sight of the engraver, and naturally say it is Le Brun, it is Poussin, &c. The Battles of Alexander, after Le Brun, are alone sufficient to carry his name to remote posterity as an artist of the highest merit. Gerard Audran has been called the boast of his country and profession. "Though he did not invent the art of mingling etching with the work of the graver, he improved so much upon what had previously been done in this way, and so outstripped his competitors in the race, that it may easily be believed, he would have invented this art, had it not previously existed. Untrammelled, or not submitting to such trammels as the mechanical part of the art of engraving imposed upon his contemporaries, he looked with bolder vision into that of painting, or rather he looked abroad into the physical world, and into the resources of his own vigorous mind, for the materials of honest fame, and was guided alone by the light which they mutually reflected on each other." This artist was born at Lyons in 1640. He acquired his early skill under the tuition of his father, who was himself an engraver of some celebrity. He then removed to Paris, where his reputation introduced him to the acquaintance of Le Brun, by whom he was employed in engraving his pictures. Gerard Audran also studied at Rome under Carlo Maratti, where he engraved several fine plates, particularly the portrait of Pope Clement the Ninth. Recalled to Paris by Louis the Fourteenth, at the instiga-

tion of Colbert, after a residence of three years at Rome, he assiduously applied to engraving, and was appointed engraver to the King, who greatly encouraged him. In 1681 he was named councillor of the Royal Academy, and died at Paris in 1703, as much regretted for his amiable qualities as for the superiority of his talents.

Gerard Edelinek, though born at Antwerp, is fairly ranked among French artists, because it was at Paris, under the encouragement and protection of Louis the Fourteenth, that his talents shone forth. "Though Edelinek was contemporary with Gerard Audran, and must have seen the vigorous and picturesque feeling which the admixture of etching imparted to his historical works, and must have heard and probably joined in the encomiums that were justly bestowed upon them, he did not deviate from the mode of building up for himself a lofty and lasting reputation, which nature and education had marked out for him. Reckless of the halcyon gales that seemed to court his canvas, he steadily pursued his original course; and with the graver alone, he ploughed up the ample field of his fame." Edelinek was made a member of the French Royal Academy, and the king conferred on him the same honours he had bestowed on Gerard Audran, *i. e.*, a liberal pension, and an apartment at the Gobelins. It would appear that the critics of the seventeenth century were much divided in opinion as to the relative merits of the two modes of engraving practised by these artists. Though the palm of superiority justly rested with Audran, yet Edelinek was undoubtedly the first engraver in the style which had prevailed up to that period. It is supposed that Edelinek adhered to the use of the graver only, because he felt that to enter into rivalry with Audran would have ended in confirming him the *second* historical engraver of his age. Strutt says of Edelinek that he succeeded particularly in the heads of his figures, which are uncommonly fine. He understood the human figure well, but he did not draw it with the great taste and correctness which is so remarkable in the prints of Gerard Audran, neither are his hands and feet marked in that masterly manner, or with equal truth. By comparing Edelinek's excellent engraving of the Tent of Darius, from Le Brun, which he has finished in so beautiful a manner, with the Battles of Alexander, by Audran, from the same master, it will be admitted that the animation, correctness and taste of the latter, amply compensate for the want of that clearness and neatness which appear in the execution of the former.

Sebastian le Clerc was an artist of very superior powers, also patronised by Louis the Fourteenth. Le Clerc was born at Metz in 1637. He learned the first principles of drawing, and probably of mathematics, from his father, who was a celebrated goldsmith of Metz, and several proofs were given of his early skill in the use of the graver. But Le Clerc seems to have been unacquainted with etching until after his arrival in the French metropolis, which he visited with a view of improving himself as an artist, and of associating with the men of science with whose presence Paris was at that time adorned. Here he became acquainted with Le Brun, by whose recommendation he discontinued architectural and engineering pursuits, which up to this period had occupied a portion of his time, and confined his attention to designing and engraving. He soon became known to Colbert, who obtained from him an apartment in the Gobelins, and a pension of eighteen hundred livres, which, however, was assigned to him upon condition of his working for the king alone, who honoured him with the title of Engraver-Royal. He was soon after created Professor of Perspective in the Royal Academy, and a Roman knight by Pope Clement the Eleventh. Le Clerc died at Paris in 1714, aged 77. "Perhaps no artist has displayed a greater diversity of endowment than Le Clerc. From his mathematical science and the studies he connected therewith, he became an enlightened architect, engineer, and teacher of perspective; from his knowledge of drawing, his various reading, and his study of the works of Le Brun and Callot, above all, from the energy of his own genius, he became an accomplished designer and engraver, excelling—to use the sentiments of a French writer,—in almost every department of fine art; history, landscape, animals, ruined and modern edifices, were by turns the subjects of his pencil and of his graver. His compositions are full of knowledge and variety, his draperies simple, his forms correct, his heads noble and characteristic."

Among the distinguished names that adorn this period, those of the elder and younger Drevet are well known to

artists. The elder was born at Lyons in 1664, and died at Paris in 1739. He studied under Gerard Audran and Edelinck, and soon became an admirable engraver of portraits, to which he chiefly confined his talents. He contributed to spread through Europe the likenesses of the royal and noble personages of the day; and the fame of Hyacinthe Rigaud, the portrait painter, went hand-in-hand with his own. His engraving is firm, yet delicate; and his plates highly finished. He drew well, and had the rare art to transfuse much of the style of the painter after whom he was working. Pierre Drevet the younger, the son of the former, was born at Paris in 1697, and died in the same year with his father, 1739. At the age of thirteen he surprised the artists and amateurs of Paris with an engraving so well performed, that probably no man, his father excepted, could have surpassed it; and at the age of twenty-six he produced his whole-length portrait of Bossuet, which excited great admiration. "His whole-length portrait of Samuel Bernard is a still more surprising effort of art; and in both these portraits the varied expression of the surfaces of natural objects, of flesh, hair (particularly the white hair of Bossuet), ermine, lawn, lace, mohair, velvet, gold-fringes, carved wood, bronze, marble, paper,—each engraven in a peculiar and appropriate manner, may well excite wonder, and most the wonder of those most intimately conversant with the capabilities of the art." Drevet, however, did not confine himself to portraits. The Presentation of Christ in the Temple is esteemed his master-piece, but is said to be too metallic in its general complexion, probably from being executed entirely with the graver and dry needle. Cochin says of the engravings of the younger Drevet, that they are admirable for delicacy and beauty of execution, but much too laboured for the character of history.

Jean Louis Rouillet was an artist of some note, who flourished about the time of the elder Drevet. He studied in Italy for ten years, where his merit recommended him to the notice of the most celebrated artists of the time. Rouillet handled the graver with great freedom and facility, and drew the human figure correctly. His large print of the Three Marias at the Sepulchre, after A. Carracci, which he engraved during his residence at Naples, is much admired for correctness of outline, force of chiaroscuro, beauty of engraving, and accuracy of expression.

The seventeenth century, so renowned for artistic skill in France, produced many other engravers, whose peculiar excellences and modes of working it would be impossible for us to notice. Towards its close were born Dupuis, De Vivier, Cochin the elder, Simoneau, Chereau, Beauvais, and a host of others, afterwards well known in the French school. De Vivier gained some celebrity by his power of seizing striking likenesses, and executed a great number of medallions, the most remarkable of which are those of the coronation of Louis the Fifteenth, the equestrian statue of that prince, the busts of the kings in different ages, and that of Peter the Great. Correctness of outline marks the works of Chereau; taste and spirit those of Cochin; but amidst the crowd of meritorious engravers of this period, it is difficult to particularize any. There is one name, however, so much better known than the rest that we may briefly notice the life of the individual. Jacques Philippe Le Bas was born at Paris, in 1708, and died there in 1782. He distinguished himself very early in life, by producing a great number of beautiful prints, consisting of landscapes, peopled with small pastoral and domestic figures, such as those of Wouwerman and Teniers, "which depend for the interest they excite rather upon an animated and expressive touch, than upon the anatomical or academical prowess displayed in their outlines." Le Bas is said to have acquired his early and extensive fame from the great number of prints to which he affixed his name, many of which were allowed to be of inferior merit, and the work of his pupils. "Fully persuaded," says Watelet, "that a very small number of real connoisseurs existed, Le Bas conceived that he would be deemed the best artist who put his name to the greatest number of plates, and the great reputation he acquired evinced that he had not been deceived. But his fame would have been more lasting had he acknowledged only those engravings which were begun by his best pupils, and which he himself terminated. Le Bas, however, merits a distinguished rank among those artists who have been deservedly celebrated for their taste. His finishing touch, and piquant and spirited style, imparted animation and grace even to those prints, which, in other respects, were of inferior execution. He was the first after Rembrandt, who made use of the dry point, and his pupils have since

brought the use of that valuable tool to still greater perfection."

Le Bas had under his roof some assistants of great talent, and he so managed their various degrees of skill that all redounded to his own honour. He is said to have been the most manufacturing engraver that had yet appeared in Europe, employing some of his pupils entirely upon the skies in his plates, others entirely upon trees, others upon etching figures, and so forth, thus reducing his art very much to the level of a trade.

Jean Jacques Balechou was also an extraordinary artist flourishing at the same period. He worked entirely with the graver, and the clearness of his strokes and the depth of colour which he produced were esteemed superior to anything that had yet appeared. But he did not draw well, and his prints were therefore wanting in freedom, harmony, and correctness. "With all his beautiful clearness of manual execution, his flesh appears metallic, his rocks rather resemble ice, and the foam of his agitated sea some thick and lazy-pacing liquid. His most justly celebrated work is a large storm and shipwreck after Vernet, to which these remarks are chiefly applicable, but then here is a tempest-torn sky where the dark clouds are admirably engraved, and here is water in its liquid state, expressed with so much of the truth of nature, that while it left the predecessors of Balechou at an immense distance, it has been the school of Woollett, Byrne, and all those who have attempted to express the genuine character and appearance of the sea when agitated by a tempest."

The last engraver of the French school, which it will come within our province to speak of, is John George Wille, a native of Germany, who established himself in Paris about the middle of the last century, and who showed that, notwithstanding the high repute of many of his predecessors, it was possible to surpass them all in precision of execution. His style was particularly adapted to express differences of texture, as silks, satins, and all kinds of shining draperies, a proof of which is given in his print the *Death of Cleopatra*. The figure is habited in white satin, which the engraver has so successfully imitated that the pencil of the most able painter could not exceed it. A writer in Rees's *Encyclopædia* thus carries on the account of Wille's peculiar talent: "Not only shining draperies, but rough and rich objects also, such as the carpets, tissues, and dead game of Gerard Douw, and the woollen draperies and leather of Dietrichy, were equally within the scope of his powers. His manual powers were, indeed, surprising. The graver was a simple and very ancient instrument. Centuries had looked on, while thousands of artists had tried their skill with it, yet it remained for the accurate eye, and firm, delicate, and steady hand of Wille, to render it subservient to the expression of the textures of all the various substances that nature has produced, or art has interwoven. From this general description of the art of Wille, however, some abatement should be made, at least certain exceptions, the concomitant errors of human nature should be pointed out to those who might else be in danger of having their taste led away by indiscriminate admiration. The mathematical precision of Wille was far better adapted to express the polish and regularity of art, than the wild and rugged surfaces in which nature more frequently delights, and even his flesh, which it must necessarily be of cardinal importance to express well in every historical work, when compared with that which is so admirably characterized in the best works of Bartolozzi and Strange, will appear deficient in that soft firmness, and delicacy of texture, which distinguishes it from all other surfaces whatever."

Wille was a member of the French Academy, and engraver to the King. He lived to an advanced age, enjoying every advantage of patronage and support. Surviving the troubles of the revolution, he died at Paris not long after. He employed the greater part of his time, during the zenith of his fame, in diffusing through Europe, along with his own, the fame of Gerard Douw, Dietrichy, Terbourg, Netscher, Metzner, and such other masters as were celebrated for the beauty of their execution, and the charms of their chiaroscuro.

The existing French school of engravers has also produced its eminent artists, but the mere mechanical processes employ too much of their attention, so that the very regularity and uniformity of their work makes it unpleasant to the eye of those whose taste has been guided to the higher capabilities of this pleasing art.